



State of Louisiana

Department of Environmental Quality



Kathleen Babineaux Blanco
Governor

Mike D. McDaniel, Ph.D.
Secretary

For Immediate Release
June 28, 2004

Contact: Rodney Mallett
225.219.3964

Louisiana Meets Stringent Air Quality Standards

BATON ROUGE – In a letter to Governor Kathleen Babineaux Blanco, the United States Environmental Protection Agency announced that the entire state is in attainment for fine particulate matter, also known as PM 2.5. The EPA conducted a thorough review of three years of air-monitoring data and determined that Louisiana met the stringent PM 2.5 standard.

“This means that across your state, all areas meet the more protective, health-based fine-particle standard,” said Richard E. Greene, EPA regional administrator. “That is truly good news for the residents of your state.”

Fine particle pollution represents one of the most significant barriers to clean air facing our nation today. These tiny particles – less than 1/30th of a human hair – have been scientifically linked to serious human health problems. Their ability to be suspended in air for long periods of time makes them a public health threat far beyond the source of emissions. These small particles can be inhaled deep inside the lungs where they can cause health problems.

Fine particles can be emitted directly or formed in the atmosphere. Particles emitted directly come from sources such as diesel engines, wood burning activities and other industrial and commercial combustion processes. Fine particles formed in the atmosphere are those that are formed when gases from combustion sources such as sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide and volatile organic compounds react to form particles of sulfate, nitrate and organic carbon.

“Better air quality is a high priority in my administration and is an important part of DEQ’s commitment to a healthy environment,” Governor Blanco said. “I am pleased with EPA’s findings that the whole state is in compliance with the particulate matter regulations.”

“The community effort by individuals and industry to reduce air pollution has played a part in the reduction of particle pollution,” DEQ Secretary Mike McDaniel said. “The trend in improving air quality leads a better environment and an improved quality of life.”

In July 1997, EPA issued these new more stringent annual and 24-hour national ambient air quality standards for fine particulate matter. The data was collected over a three-year period from 26 air-monitoring sites located in metropolitan and rural areas throughout the state.